

1 Vision Area

1 Home Bible Study

The Big Picture

Today's lesson is an encouragement for us to spend more time together—as family units—in the word. It reminds us of the importance of parents/older family members making a specific point to share Scripture with younger members in the house. This concept, however, is equally important for individuals who are older or similar ages (retired people, roommates, etc.)

Biblical Text

Deuteronomy 6 (NIV)

Materials Needed

Reading Schedule, *copy for everyone*

Preparing for the Lesson

Today's lesson is really more of a meta-lesson, that is, a lesson focused more on what needs to be happening during the course of the week rather than the actual events of the group time. It is my hope that this lesson encourages you to do something during the week and that you leave excited for the upcoming week more than feeling unfulfilled about the actual lesson.

Also, many of the things that are said in Deuteronomy 6 focus on parents teaching children and I will use that language here more times than not, but the emphasis is no less important for individuals who are retired and their children have moved away or college roommates. I think a college student has some sense of commitment—as a disciple—to share with his or her roommates. Therefore, please encourage the members of your group to not dismiss this lesson because “it just doesn't apply to us.” It does!

My assumption is that people have a great desire to be involved in home Bible studies and at times feel a sense of necessity to do so. I also assume that people often think that every other Christian family around them spends a large amount of time every morning around the breakfast table reading Scripture together. My experience, when I ask people to tell me about their times of Bible study together as a family, is that a lot of people want to do so, but very few people actually are doing it.

I have thought about why the gap between what we think we need to be doing and what we are actually doing exists. I cannot give you every answer for every family unit that is in your group, but I can tell you in my own family the issue—more times time not—is simply a desire to make this a commitment. We seem to have all the time in the world for sports, television, eating out, etc., but never enough time to sit down and read together. The other thing that seems to happen is that we forget (or as adults do not think this way ourselves?) to point to the “God moments” as they happen around us. Something frustrating happens to us and we react or get angry about it, but do we remember to say: “You

(Continued on page 2)

Preparing for the Lesson

know, God tells us to give thanks to him in every situation, so let's stop and say thank you even though I this situation is frustrating." What makes a bigger impact on your children: reading about that verse in Scripture or hearing you say it in practice?

Your goal for this week is to get everyone in your group to spend time in study together as a family unit this week. Doing this as a family unit is key because what we see in Deuteronomy 6 is an example of this happening together, not with everyone going off in their separate corners to do their own "quiet time" with God. Nothing wrong with doing so, but I think there is a reason God points out the importance of teaching Scripture in a family context. Sometimes I think we make reading Scripture together too complicated. We want to be sure we have a lot of questions to ask and perhaps an application story to tell (we will talk more about this next lesson) when what we really need to do is simply hear/share the word of God. So, make your primary objective this week for people to just be in the Word together.

We are not reading these verses as a part of our lesson text today, but be familiar with Deuteronomy 4.1-2, 9. It is here that we get a good summary of what will appear in chapter 6 and where we get the lesson title from today. It is through teaching the stories of God to others that we remember who he is.

The idea of remembering who God is and more importantly, the relationship he has with his people, is an important thread that runs through the text today. Be sure to contrast following God's commands simply because he told us (I mean, he is God and so he can make any rule he wants, right?) with the fact that keeping God's commandments are the result of a covenant relationship he has made with us. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel saw this displayed in very drastic ways (see Achan's sin in Joshua 7). We are also in a covenant relationship with God and are under his grace through the blood of Jesus, but I wonder if we have forgotten the relational aspect of this. Some authors argue—rightfully so, I think—that we have made our following of God simply a set of rules for us to be good, moral people rather than continue and strengthen the covenant relationship we have with God as his disciples.

Let me encourage you to follow-up with members of your group this week. Too often we "assign" an activity, but then never have any follow-up so when the next group rolls around, individuals have not done anything and the point of the lesson gets lost as we move on to the next lesson. Email is a great way to simply remind people you were thinking of them as you read this morning and you hope their reading is going well.

Possible Lesson Outline

NOTE: Here is what we will do with this lesson as an eating first, lots of children group.

Eating and visiting.

Gather the group, allowing the children to continue playing.

If you feel like you need to begin with an ice-breaker question, you might ask people to share their earliest memory of hearing, reading, or memorizing the Bible. Be mindful that not every person in your group may have grown up in a church context (or even a church context that emphasizes scripture) so be sure to affirm and appreciate those with a different background.

Read Deuteronomy 6. I will read the entire passage.

Have a discussion time. We will probably focus on the last four questions, but you know your group best, so use questions that will encourage them to be involved in reading this upcoming week.

Invite the children back in, summarize the focus on the lesson (See For the Kids section), and pray.

Lesson Activities

Daily Reading

Everyone in your group is encouraged to spend time every day this week reading Scripture together as a family. The point of this exercise is not in-depth discussion, but more a way to be in God's word, hearing what it has to say.

To this end, I have included a scheduled reading you can follow, along with a question from each reading that can be discussed. I know we have a regular reading schedule that was handed out on the bookmarks at the beginning of the month, but the stories that were selected here—all healing stories of Jesus—were done so in an attempt to provide stories your children could relate to and remember. If your household is made up of just you or retired individuals, you may want to read the schedule on the bookmarks or you may want to add your own discussion questions to this list.

If you have children, you probably have already addressed this issue, but I find that buying a Bible written specifically for children is helpful for elementary students. They understand bits and pieces of a translation such as the NIV, but miss large portions of it. I really like the International Children's Bible (published by Tommy Nelson and the Bible we give out to those graduating from Kindergarten) and have also used the Contemporary English Version (CEV) as well.

For the Kids

It may seem totally contrary to the point of this lesson, but this may be one of those lessons where it is better for the children to be a part of the prayer time at the end of the lesson rather than part of the entire lesson.

Here's why. If we can focus a few minutes on parents in order to encourage them to be involved in regular reading with their children, then we will have allowed the children to be a part of learning throughout the week, rather than just for a few minutes on Sunday.

I recommend having your discussion, then inviting your children in at the end. Read Deuteronomy 6.4-5. Tell the children that they are supposed to love God with everything they have. Their lives should be centered on loving God and everything they do should be done remembering how much God loves them and how much he wants them to follow him and do what he asks them to do. Then tell the children that God goes on to tell parents that they are supposed to help children learn about who God is through reading his word. So, for the upcoming week, you will be spending time regularly reading together. Then close your time in prayer.

Spiritual Formation / Worship

Daily scripture reading is one of the foundational elements of spiritual formation. It is interesting that in Christian history, every major revival that occurred began with a time of renewed scripture reading. (We often think of growth as being the result of someone coming up with a new way of thinking about scripture, but it has consistently been a return to scripture that has begun the process of change.)

The regular reading of scripture is so crucial to faith formation that I would venture to say that if you are not reading regularly, your spiritual growth is minimal at best, if even existent at all. As a leader of groups, you cannot afford to not be involved in regular scripture reading.

For Next Week

As has been mentioned before, this week's focus is on the practice of reading Scripture together, so everyone is encouraged to spend time as a family unit (again, this can be traditional family as we think of it with parents and children, or it can be a retired couple, college roommates, etc.) reading Scripture together. The point is not to have a lengthy discussion or to completely exegete the text, but rather, to simply hear the text.

Prayer Ideas

Be sure to pray that group members will be diligent in reading together this week.

Discussion Questions

1. The commands and instructions we see in Deuteronomy 6 are a part of a covenant God made with his people. How often do we think of our own response to God and his instructions as a part of our covenant relationship with him? How often do we simply follow his laws because, well, that's what we are supposed to do to be good people? How can we change our perspective?
2. Throughout Deuteronomy 6 we hear a repetition of the theme "follow these commands so it will go well for you in a land flowing with milk and honey." In a world currently occupying Wall Street, do we consider our circumstances as a land flowing with milk and honey? So what has changed: us or our circumstances? How do we change this?
3. What does it mean to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, etc. . . ." Sure, we all know it means to love him with everything we have, but what does that look like in "real life" on a Tuesday afternoon or a Friday morning?
4. When was the last time you talked to your children/housemate specifically about the commandments of God? How can we do a better job of talking about the commands of God more?
5. What are ways we tie the commands of God on our hands or bind them to our foreheads today? How about ways we write them on the doorframes and gates of our houses? Is this an effective strategy for remembering the commands of God and how could we do an even better job of this?
6. Deuteronomy 6.20-25 describes a pattern of a reminder ("What is the meaning. . . ?" and a rehearsal/retelling ("We were slaves . . . but the Lord brought us out. . . ") of what God has done in the life of his people, (specifically that family). What sort of reminders do you have in your family that present opportunities to rehearse the story of God? What stories do you have in your own life or the life of your family that need to be retold?
7. Today we are being encouraged, based on the example we see in Deuteronomy 6, to spend time this week in the sharing of Scripture with individuals in our home. What do find to be the biggest challenge to home Bible study? What are ways we can overcome those challenges to make home Bible study a habit, versus an occasional activity?

What's Next

Next week we will continue to look at 1 Home Bible Study but will focus more on what we study, rather than the need to study. If you want to read ahead, we will be looking at Psalm 119.

Reading Schedule

Luke 5.12-16

Most people would be afraid to touch someone who had leprosy. Why do you think Jesus wanted to touch this man and heal him?

Luke 5.17-16

Why do you think the friends of this sick man tried so hard to get him to see Jesus?

Luke 8.26-39

What kinds of things can we tell people we know about Jesus?

Luke 8.42b-48

How amazing would it be to have Jesus just touch you and you be healed?

Luke 13.10-13

How do you think this woman felt after having been bent over for 18 years, but now she was healed?

Luke 17.11-19

What reasons do we have to be thankful to God?

Luke 18.35-43

Why do you people praise God when someone is made well?

Reading Schedule

Luke 5.12-16

Most people would be afraid to touch someone who had leprosy. Why do you think Jesus wanted to touch this man and heal him?

Luke 5.17-16

Why do you think the friends of this sick man tried so hard to get him to see Jesus?

Luke 8.26-39

What kinds of things can we tell people we know about Jesus?

Luke 8.42b-48

How amazing would it be to have Jesus just touch you and you be healed?

Luke 13.10-13

How do you think this woman felt after having been bent over for 18 years, but now she was healed?

Luke 17.11-19

What reasons do we have to be thankful to God?

Luke 18.35-43

Why do you people praise God when someone is made well?